

## Message Text

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54

ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /031 W

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R 281155Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4339

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

USMISSION USUN NY

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COMUSSAG

S E C R E T PHNOM PENH 14482

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CB

SUBJECT: FIRST ASSESSMENT OF THE INCOMING LONG BORET GOVERNMENT

REF: (A) PHNOM PENH 14389/261215Z DEC 73

(B) PHNOM PENH 14470/281030Z DEC 73

1. THE INCOMING LONG BORET GOVERNMENT APPEARS TO BE BETTER EQUIPPED TO COPE WITH CAMBODIA'S EXTRAORDINARY ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS THAN ANY OF ITS PREDECESSORS IN THE PAST TWO YEARS. BUT THE PROBLEMS THEMSELVES HAVE BECOME FAR MORE ACUTE.

2. THE CABINET (REFTEL A) HAS LITTLE NEW BLOOD: 13 OF ITS 16 MEMBERS ARE HOLDOVERS. BUT MOST OF THE DEAD WOOD IN EARLIER CABINETS HAS BEEN ELIMINATED, AND THE SIXTEEN APPEAR TO US TO BE (IN KHMER TERMS) RELATIVELY PRODUCTIVE AND HARDWORKING. THE AVERAGE AGE HAS COME DOWN BY PERHAPS A DECADE.

3. THE PROMISE OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT RESTS IN FIVE POINTS:  
(A) IN CONTRAST TO THE LAST THREE PRIME MINISTERS,  
SECRET

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BORET HAS THE CO

NFIDENCE OF BOTH LON NOL AND SIRIK MATAK;

THIS HAS BEEN MANIFEST IN THE RAPID NEGOTIATIONS ON THE CABINET AND ON ITS AMBITIOUS PROGRAM; LON NOL APPEARS

READY TO DELEGATE SOME SUBSTANTIAL AUTHORITY BORET;

(B) FIRST REACTIONS FROM THE ARMY SUGGESTS THAT THE ANTAGONISMS WHICH MARKED RELATIONS BETWEEN CIVILIANS AND MILITARY UNDER THE LAST THREE CABINETS ARE LIKELY TO BE MUTED IN THIS ONE; BORET HIMSELF CALLS FOR THE "CLOSEST COOPERATION" WITH THE ARMY IN HIS PROGRAM (REFTEL B), AND COMMITS THE GOVERNMENT TO ENFORCE NATIONAL CONSCRIPTION;

(C) THE NEW CABINET PUTS THE SEAL ON THE COOPERATION OF SIRIK MATAK'S REPUBLICANS AND LON NOL'S SOCIO-REPUBLICANS;

(D) FAR MORE CLEARLY THAN ITS PREDECESSORS, THE INCOMING GOVERNMENT APPEARS TO RECOGNIZE THE GRAVITY OF THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS THE COUNTRY FACES, AND TO COMMIT ITSELF IN ITS PROGRAM (SOMETHING NO EARLIER GOVERNMENT HAS DONE) TO ATTEMPT TO RESOLVE THEM; AND,

(E) LONG BORET HAS A SKILL AS A POLITICIAN WHICH NONE OF THIS IMMEDIATE PREDECESSORS HAS HAD.

4. THAT SAID, THERE ARE OBVIOUS WEAKNESSES IN THE GOVERNMENT'S MAKEUP. IT REPRESENTS ONLY A PART OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM, RUNNING FROM CENTER TO RIGHT, WITH RATHER MORE WEIGHT ON THE LATTER SIDE. ALTHOUGH IN TAM'S EDUCATION MINISTER, KEO SANGKIM, A FORMER DEMOCRAT, WILL STAY ON, IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE MUCH APPEAL TO THE LEFT LEANING BUT INCOME AND PERQUISITE COECIOUS SOCIAL CLASS CONSTITUTED BY CAMBODIA'S 20,000 TEACHERS. UNREST AMONG THE TEACHERS, WIOC THE POSSIBLE SYMPATHETIC REACTION OF STUDENTS, WILL CLEARLY BE THE GREATEST NEAR-TERM CHALLENGE TO THE GOVERNMENT. BORET WILL BE ABLE TO OFFER THE TEACHERS SOME INCREASE IN REMUNERATION (AT THE PRICE OF A STIFF DEVALUATION OF THE RIEL, BUT NO MATTER WHAT HE DOES THE GOVERNMENT'S OFFER WILL FALL FAR SHORT OF THE TEACHERS' DEMANDS. IT WILL TAKE ALL OF BORET'S SKILL TO NEGOTIATE AROUND THIS SHORTFALL WITHOUT ACCIDE .

5. IN A BROADER FRAMEWORK, THIS GOVERNMENT SHARES WITH  
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ALL ITS PREDECESSORS A FUNDAMENTAL COMMITMENT TO THE STATUS QUO IN THE SOCIETY, AND IN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS. WE CAN EXPECT OF IT A MORE INTELLIGENT, PROBLEM SOLVING APPROACH TO GOVERNING A COUNTRY AT WAR. WE CAN EXPECT IT AT LEAST TO ADDRESS THE GREAT QUESTIONS OF CIVIL AND MILITARY DISCIPLINE, TAX EVASION AND CORRUPTION, WHICH HAVE SUCH A CORROSIVE EFFECT ON THE REPUBLIC'S WAR EFFORT. WE CAN EXPECT IT TO MAKE BETTER USE OF THE MEAGER ENERGIES AVAILABLE TO THE REPUBLIC. WE CANNOT EXPECT IT TO GIVE A NEW IMPULSE TO THE COUNTRY, NOR TO REENGAGE IN ANY NUMBER THE DISAFFECTED AND APATHETIC MAJORITY.

6. IN SHORT, THIS GOVERNMENT SHOULD VWVE AS GOOD A

PERFORMANCE AS CAN BE OBTAINED WITHIN THE PRESENT  
POLITICAL STRUCTURE.  
ENDERS

SECRET

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